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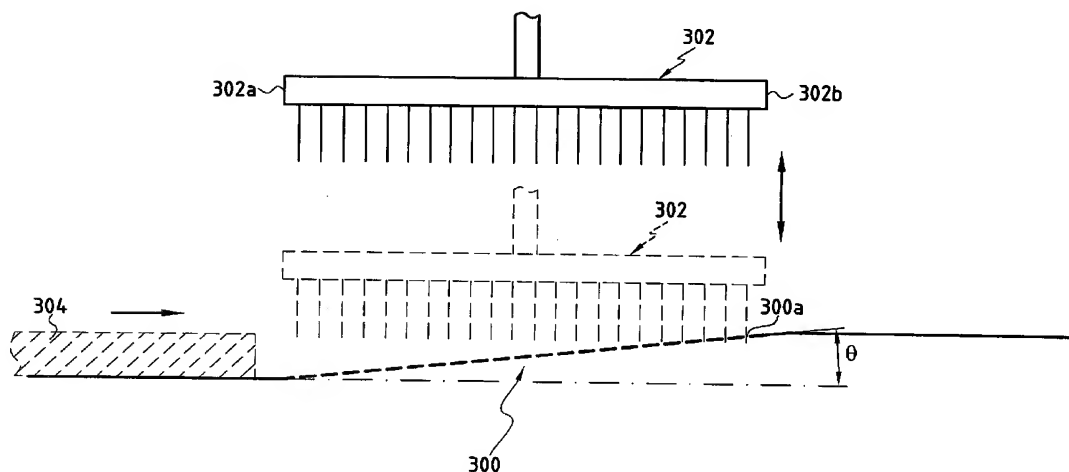
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(54) Title: METHOD OF PRODUCING A FIBROUS PREFORM



(57) Abstract: Method for producing a fibrous preform, especially by needling a fiber material (e.g., discontinuous pitch-based or PAN-based fiber). A needle-penetrable mold plate (10) having at least one mold cavity (12) therein for receiving the fiber material is provided. The use of a needle-penetrable mold plate allows the mold plate having the fiber material therein to be passed freely through a linear needling device, such as a linear needling loom, without having to take rigorous care to limit a needling path to the discontinuous fiber material, as in the conventional art. The mold plate is moved relative to the needling device one or more times until a desired level of material density (sometimes measured by fiber content percentage) is attained. Preferably, the mold plate is additionally moved and/or allowed to move along a direction generally transverse to the direction along which the mold plate moves relative to the needling device, so as to avoid the conventional problem of needle "tracking" and thereby create a better needling effect.

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